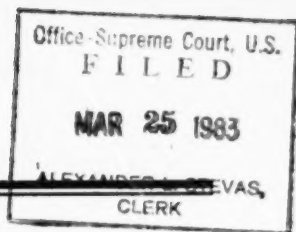


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IN THE  
**Supreme Court of the United States**

OCTOBER TERM, 1982

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S/S COVE RANGER her engines, tackle, boilers, equipment,  
furnishings in rem, COVE SHIPPING COMPANY, INC.,  
C.M.C. TANKERS, AND C.T.S. ASSOCIATES, in personam,  
*Petitioners,*

v.

ST. GEORGE PACKING COMPANY, INC.,  
*Respondent.*

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**PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO  
THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT**

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**QUESTION PRESENTED FOR REVIEW**

Whether the Rule of The Steamship Pennsylvania v. Troop, 86 U.S. (19 Wall.) 125, 22 L.Ed. 148 (1873), continues to be the law of the land in ship collision cases involving the violation of a collision-avoidance statute or regulation.

**PARTIES OF INTEREST**

The following listed persons have an interest in the decision of this case.

**S/S COVE RANGER**

**C.M.C. Tankers**

**Cove Shipping Company, Inc.**

**C.T.S. Associates**

**St. George Packaging Company, Inc.**

**Peninsular Fire Insurance Company**

**William D. Sheppard**

**Reino A. Taskinen**

**John Taskinen**

**The West of England (Luxembourg)**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
QUESTION PRESENTED FOR REVIEW .....	i
PARTIES OF INTEREST .....	ii
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES .....	iv
OPINION BELOW .....	1
JURISDICTION .....	2
STATEMENT OF THE CASE .....	2
REASON FOR GRANTING THE WRIT .....	4
THE DECISION OF THE DISTRICT COURT AND THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT IN THIS CASE CONFLICTS WITH ALL PRIOR DECISIONS OF THE UNITED STATES SU- PREME COURT AND THE CIRCUIT COURTS OF APPEAL ON THE QUESTION PRESENTED FOR REVIEW .....	4
CONCLUSION .....	15
APPENDIX .....	1a

## TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES:	Page
<i>Allied Chemical Corp. v. Hess Tankship Co. of Delaware</i> , 661 F.2d 1044 (5th Cir. 1981) .....	11
<i>Andros Shipping Co. v. Panama Canal Company</i> , 298 F.2d 720 (5th Cir. 1962) .....	11
<i>Belden v. Chase</i> , 150 U.S. 674, 14 S.Ct. 264 (1893) ...	5
<i>Bigelow v. RKO Radio Pictures</i> , 327 U.S. 251, 66 S.Ct. 574 (1946) .....	5
<i>Bonner v. City of Prichard</i> , 661 F.2d 1206 (11th Cir. 1981) (en banc) .....	6
<i>Boyer v. The MERRY QUEEN</i> , 202 F.2d 575 (3d Cir. 1953) .....	9
<i>Candies Towing Co., Inc. v. M/V B &amp; C ESERMAN</i> , 673 F.2d 91 (5th Cir. 1982) .....	11
<i>Commercial Transport Corp. v. Martin Oil Service, Inc.</i> , 374 F.2d 813 (7th Cir. 1967) .....	13
<i>Complaint of Tug Helen B. Moran, Inc.</i> , 560 F.2d 527 (2d Cir. 1977) .....	8
<i>Complaint of Wasson</i> , 495 F.2d 571 (7th Cir.), cert. denied, 419 U.S. 844, 95 S.Ct. 78 (1974) .....	12
<i>Diesel Tanker F. A. Verdon, Inc. v. Stakeboat Number 2</i> , 340 F.2d 465 (2nd Cir. 1965) .....	8
<i>Eastern S.S. Co. v. International Harvester Co. of New Jersey</i> , 189 F.2d 472 (6th Cir. 1951) .....	12
<i>Erie Lackawanna Railway Co. v. Timpany</i> , 495 F.2d 830 (2nd Cir. 1974) .....	8
<i>Esso Standard Oil Co. v. Oil Screw Tug MALUCOI</i> , 332 F.2d 211 (4th Cir. 1964) .....	10
<i>Federal Insurance Co. v. S.S. ROYALTON</i> , 312 F.2d 671 (6th Cir. 1963) .....	11
<i>First National Bank of Chicago v. Material Service Corp.</i> , 597 F.2d 1110 (7th Cir. 1979) .....	13
<i>First National Bank of Chicago v. Material Service Corp.</i> , 544 F.2d 911 (7th Cir. 1976) .....	13
<i>Florida East Coast Railway Co. v. Revilo Corp.</i> , 637 F.2d 1060 (5th Cir. 1981) .....	11

## Table of Authorities Continued

	Page
<i>Gary v. U.S. Oil Screw ECHO</i> , 334 F.2d 199 (4th Cir. 1964) .....	10
<i>General Seafoods Corp. v. J.S. Packard Dredging Co.</i> , 120 F.2d 117 (1st Cir. 1941) .....	7
<i>Lie v. San Francisco and Portland Steamship Co.</i> , 243 U.S. 291, 37 S.Ct. 270 (1917) .....	5
<i>Matson Navigation Co. v. Pope and Talbet, Inc.</i> , 149 F.2d 295 (9th Cir.), cert. denied, 326 U.S. 737, 66 S.Ct. 46 (1945) .....	14
<i>Moran Towing &amp; Transportation Co., Inc. v. City of New York</i> , 620 F.2d 356 (2nd Cir. 1980) .....	8
<i>Orange Beach Water, Sewer and Fire Protection Authority v. M/V ALVA, et al.</i> , 680 F.2d 1374 (11th Cir. 1982) .....	6
<i>Osaka Shosen Kaisha, Ltd. v. Angelos, Leitch &amp; Co., Ltd.</i> , 301 F.2d 59 (4th Cir. 1962) .....	10
<i>Pacific Tow Boat Company v. States Marine Corp. of Delaware</i> , 276 F.2d 745 (9th Cir. 1960) .....	14
<i>Pure Oil Co. v. Union Barge Line Corp.</i> , 227 F.2d 868 (6th Cir. 1955) .....	12
<i>Reiss Steamship Co. v. United States Steel Corp.</i> , 374 F.2d 142 (6th Cir. 1967) .....	12
<i>Republic of United States of Brazil v. The M/V "MARKLAND"</i> , 290 F.2d 165 (5th Cir. 1961) .....	11
<i>Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Co. v. Boston Marine Insurance Co.</i> , 136 U.S. 408, 10 S.Ct. 934 (1890) .	5
<i>Rowe v. Brooks</i> , 329 F.2d 35 (4th Cir. 1964) .....	10
<i>Seaboard Tug &amp; Barge, Inc. v. REDERI AB/DISA</i> , 213 F.2d 772 (1st Cir. 1954) .....	7
<i>Shell Petroleum Co., Ltd. v. Peschken</i> , 290 F.2d 685 (3rd Cir.), cert. denied, 368 U.S. 900, 82 S.Ct. 172 (1961)	9
<i>States Steamship Co. v. Permanente Steamship Corp.</i> , 231 F.2d 82 (9th Cir. 1956) .....	14
<i>Tank Barge Hygrade v. The GATCO NEW JERSEY</i> , 250 F.2d 485 (3rd Cir. 1957) .....	9
<i>The BOHEMIAN CLUB</i> , 134 F.2d 1000 (3rd Cir. 1942)	9

## Table of Authorities Continued

	Page
<i>The DENALI</i> , 105 F.2d 413 (9th Cir. 1939), <i>rehearing</i> , 112 F.2d 952 (9th Cir.), <i>cert. denied</i> , 311 U.S. 687, 61 S.Ct. 65 (1940) .....	14
<i>The FORT FETTERMAN v. South Carolina State Hwy.</i> <i>Dept.</i> , 261 F.2d 563 (4th Cir. 1958) .....	10
<i>The Steamship PENNSYLVANIA v. Troop</i> , 86 U.S. (19 Wall.) 125, 22 L.Ed. 148 (1873) .....	i, 4
<i>Tide Water Associated Oil Co. v. The SYOSSET</i> , 203 F.2d 264 (3rd Cir. 1953) .....	9
<i>Tug Ocean Prince, Inc. v. United States</i> , 436 F. Supp. 907 (S.D.N.Y. 1977), <i>rev'd</i> , 584 F.2d 1151 (2nd Cir. 1978), <i>cert. denied</i> , 440 U.S. 959, 99 S.Ct. 1499 (1979)	8
<i>Union Oil Company of California v. Tugboat JACINTO</i> , 451 F.2d 1369 (9th Cir. 1971) .....	14
<i>Waterman Steamship Corp. v. Gay Cottons</i> , 414 F.2d 724 (9th Cir. 1969) .....	13
 STATUTES:	
33 U.S.C. § 221 .....	8
28 U.S.C. § 1254(1) .....	2
International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, 33 U.S.C. § 1602, Rule 5 .....	5
 TREATISES AND OTHER AUTHORITIES	
Gilmore & Black, <i>The Law of Admiralty</i> (1st ed. 1957), 404-05 .....	5

IN THE  
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OCTOBER TERM, 1982

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No. \_\_\_\_\_  
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S/S COVE RANGER her engines, tackle, boilers, equipment,  
furnishings in rem, COVE SHIPPING COMPANY, INC.,  
C.M.C. TANKERS, AND C.T.S. ASSOCIATES, in personam,  
*Petitioners,*

v.

ST. GEORGE PACKING COMPANY, INC.,  
*Respondent.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO  
THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT**  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Petitioners respectfully pray that a Writ of Certiorari issue to review the Judgment and Opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit entered in this proceeding on December 28, 1982.

**OPINION BELOW**

The per curiam opinion of the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit appears in the Appendix to this Petition. The opinion rendered by the District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division, is similarly included.

## JURISDICTION

The Judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit sought to be reviewed in this case was initially entered on November 9, 1982. A timely filed Petition for Rehearing and Suggestion for Rehearing En Banc was denied on December 28, 1982. This Petition for a Writ of Certiorari was filed within ninety days of December 28, 1982. This Court's jurisdiction is invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1).

## STATEMENT OF THE CASE

At 1000 hours on March 16, 1979, the Shrimp Trawler LARRY AND MABLE II collided with the Steam Ship COVE RANGER. The pending circumstances had created a crossing situation, and under the International Rules of the Road, codified at 33 U.S.C. § 1602, the COVE RANGER was the "stand-on" vessel and the LARRY AND MABLE II was the "give-way" vessel. (TR 198) Under Rule 17, the COVE RANGER was required to maintain her course and speed. (TR 187) The LARRY AND MABLE II failed to give way and struck bow first into the aft port quarter of the COVE RANGER. After the collision, the LARRY AND MABLE II sank to her main deck, and her crew abandoned her.

The LARRY AND MABLE II was a 78-foot wooden shrimp trawler which was not equipped with any type of radar. (TR 15) The master of the LARRY AND MABLE II, William Sheppard, was at the wheel at the time of the collision. (TR 20). The LARRY AND MABLE II, traveling at approximately six to eight knots, was taking spray onto the windshield of the wheelhouse. (TR 19) The combined effect of the sun and spray caused Captain Sheppard to have a problem seeing forward and to starboard.

He did not, however, post a lookout even though he knew he was traversing a shipping lane, and even though his visibility was effectively zero. (TR 55) The fishing vessel was operating under automatic pilot, and had been doing so for approximately twenty-six hours. (TR 57-58) Captain Sheppard occasionally lowered the starboard window five or six inches in order to look out. (TR 23) He did not, however, see the COVE RANGER until just before impact. (TR 30)

This case was filed in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division, and was assigned to Senior District Judge Joseph P. Willson, sitting at Tampa by special designation. Judge Willson heard the case without a jury on March 5 and 6, 1981, and issued a "Memorandum Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law" imposing one hundred percent (100%) of the fault and liability for the collision on the COVE RANGER and her owners and operators.

Judge Willson's decision was appealed to the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. No oral argument was scheduled. The Eleventh Circuit, on November 9, 1982, rendered a per curiam affirmance pursuant to Eleventh Circuit Local Rule 25. Although the panel did not specify which subsection of Rule 25 had been relied upon, counsel's reading of the Rule would appear to indicate that the panel relied upon subsection (a), in which case, the decision to affirm without opinion was predicated on a determination that the "judgment of the District Court (was) based on findings of fact that (were) not clearly erroneous" and that "no error of law appears" in the lower court judgment. The Petitioners herein timely filed a Petition for Rehearing and Suggestion for Consid-

eration En Banc with the Eleventh Circuit, which was denied on December 28, 1982.

### **REASON FOR GRANTING THE WRIT**

**THE DECISION OF THE DISTRICT COURT AND THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT IN THIS CASE CONFLICTS WITH ALL PRIOR DECISIONS OF THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT AND THE CIRCUIT COURTS OF APPEAL ON THE QUESTION PRESENTED FOR REVIEW.**

#### **The Rule Of The Pennsylvania**

In 1873, the United States Supreme Court handed down its landmark opinion in the case of *The Steamship PENNSYLVANIA v. Troop*, 86 U.S. (19 Wall.) 125, 22 L.Ed. 148 (1873). The facts involved a collision between the bark Mary R. Troop and the steamship Pennsylvania. As a direct result of the collision, the bark sank and became a total loss. As its defense, the S/S PENNSYLVANIA alleged that the collision was caused by the bark's failure to keep a proper lookout, failure to blow a foghorn, and negligence in using only a warning bell placed on a stay. After finding that the bark was at fault, this Court stated:

The liability for damages is upon the ship or ships whose fault caused the injury. But when, as in this case, a ship at the time of a collision is in actual violation of the statutory rule intended to prevent collisions, it is no more than a reasonable presumption that the fault, if not the sole cause, was at least a contributory cause of the disaster. In such a case the burden rests upon the ship of showing not merely that her fault might not have been one of the causes, or that it probably was not, but that it could not have been. Such a rule is necessary to enforce obedience to the mandate of the statute.

86 U.S. (19 Wall.) at 136, 22 L.Ed. at 151. The Court, noting the bark's violation of navy regulations, held that

the bark failed to prove that her violation could not have been one of the causes of the collision.

This Court, on numerous occasions, has expressly reaffirmed its decision in *The PENNSYLVANIA*. See *Bigelow v. RKO Radio Pictures*, 327 U.S. 251, 66 S.Ct. 574 (1946); *Lie v. San Francisco & Portland Steamship Co.*, 243 U.S. 291, 37 S.Ct. 270, 61 L.Ed. 726 (1917); *Belden v. Chase*, 150 U.S. 674, 14 S.Ct. 264 (1893); *Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Co. v. Boston Marine Insurance Co.*, 136 U.S. 408, 10 S.Ct. 934 (1889). Commenting on the force of this Court's holding in *The PENNSYLVANIA*, Gilmore and Black have stated:

In deed a vessel at fault in connection with a collision usually derives little comfort from the rule that she cannot be held liable unless her fault contributed to the result; this contention is more often than not made futile by the so called 'Pennsylvania' rule . . . which states a drastic and unusual presumption arising on its being shown that a vessel has been guilty of statutory fault before a collision. Where this appears, the vessel thus cast in fault must prove, to escape liability, not only that the fault shown probably did not but also that it *could not* have contributed to causing the collision. This rule makes especially important the strictest compliance with the Rules of Navigation.

Gilmore & Black, *The Law of Admiralty* (1st ed. 1957), at 404-05.

#### **The Collision-Avoidance "Lookout Rule"**

Under the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, 33 U.S.C. § 1602, Rule 5:

[E]very vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circum-

stances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

**How The Pennsylvania Rule Was Violated By The Courts Below**

In the instant case, the district court, in its "Memorandum Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law," found, as a matter of fact, that the *Respondent* had failed to post a lookout at the time of the collision. (See Appendix, p. 7a). In the same breath, as a matter of law, the district court held that the burden of proof was on the *Petitioners* to establish a causal connection between the Respondent's failure to post a lookout and the resulting collision! (See Appendix, pp. 7a, 13a, 14a). The *Respondent*, not the *Petitioners*, had the burden of proving that the Respondent's violation of the "lookout rule" could not have caused the collision. The district court's failure to apply the *Pennsylvania* rule, and the Eleventh Circuit's per curiam affirmance of the district court's decision, are in direct conflict with all prior decisions of this Court and the Circuit Courts of Appeal which have addressed the issue, including the Eleventh Circuit's own decision in *Orange Beach Water, Sewer and Fire Protection Authority v. M/V ALVA*, 680 F.2d 1374 (11th Cir. 1982). In *Orange Beach*, the Eleventh Circuit, citing *The Pennsylvania*, shifted the burden of proof to the party in violation of a maritime safety statute. As a result of the circuit court's application of the *Pennsylvania* rule, the Eleventh Circuit reversed the lower court on the basis that the defendant had failed to meet its burden of proof that the violation could not have been the cause in fact of the mishap. Further, the Eleventh Circuit's *en banc* decision in *Bonner v. City of Prichard*, 661 F.2d 1206 (11th Cir. 1981), has served to adopt all of the Fifth Circuit's decisions requiring application of the *Pennsylvania* rule in circumstances such as those presented in the instant case.

### **A Review Of The Application Of The "Pennsylvania Rule" In The Other Circuit Courts**

Nine of the United States Circuit Courts of Appeal, including the Eleventh Circuit, have endorsed the *Pennsylvania* rule as an essential sanction necessary to enforce compliance with statutes and regulations designed to promote maritime safety. The rule penalizes violators of the maritime safety statutes and regulations by imposing on them a burden of proof that may be decisive when the causes of an accident are unknown or in dispute.

#### **In The First Circuit**

The United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, while having only a limited opportunity to apply the *Pennsylvania* rule, has, in those instances, placed the burden of proof upon the vessel in violation of a marine safety statute, requiring the vessel to show not merely that her fault might not have been one of the causes, or that it probably was not one of the causes, but that it could not have been one of the causes of the collision. See *Seaboard Tug and Barge, Inc. v. REDERI AB/DISA*, 213 F.2d 772 (1st Cir. 1954) (a vessel guilty of an actual violation of a statutory rule must show that her violation could not have been one of the causes of the collision in order to escape liability); *General Seafoods Corp. v. J.S. Packard Dredging Co.*, 120 F.2d 117 (1st Cir. 1941) (it is well-settled that a vessel in violation of a statutory rule, intended to prevent collisions, must prove that such violation could not have caused the resulting collision).

#### **In The Second Circuit**

The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit has adopted the *Pennsylvania* rule and has extended the Rule to cover not only maritime collisions between two vessels but also maritime allisions between

a vessel and a stationary object. In *Moran Towing & Transportation Co., Inc. v. City of New York*, 620 F.2d 356 (2nd Cir. 1980), the Second Circuit applied the *Pennsylvania* rule in a situation where a lookout mandated by 33 U.S.C. § 221, failed to adequately perform his duties. As a result of the lookout's negligence, the vessel upon which he served collided with a bridge. The circuit court found that the lookout's failure to properly perform his statutory duty constituted a violation of 33 U.S.C. § 221. 620 F.2d at 358. The *Pennsylvania* rule placed upon the vessel the burden of proving that its statutory fault, in failing to post a vigilant lookout, could not have caused the collision. 620 F.2d at 358. Since the vessel failed to meet its burden of proof, the circuit court, applying the *Pennsylvania* rule, reversed the district court's award of damages in favor of the vessel. See generally *Complaint of Tug Helen B. Moran, Inc.*, 560 F.2d 527 (2nd Cir. 1977) (under the *Pennsylvania* rule, where the violation of a statutory duty is a cause of an accident, liability may not be avoided on causal grounds by merely drawing distinctions between active and passive negligence); *Tug Ocean Prince, Inc. v. United States*, 436 F. Supp. 907 (S.D.N.Y. 1977), *rev'd*, 584 F.2d 1151 (2nd Cir. 1978) (the vessel's failure to post a lookout, when conditions were such that a lookout was statutorily required, was sufficient to trigger application of the *Pennsylvania* rule); *Erie Lackawanna Railway Co. v. Timpany*, 495 F.2d 830 (2nd Cir. 1974) (failure to post a lookout constituted a statutory violation sufficient to trigger the *Pennsylvania* rule placing the burden upon the vessel to establish that such a failure did not cause and could not have caused the accident); *Diesel Tanker F.A. Verdon, Inc. v. Stakeboat Number 2*, 340 F.2d 465 (2nd Cir. 1965) (under the *Pennsylvania* rule, where the breach of duty is statutory, it is the impossibility that it may have been one of the causes

of the collision that affords relief from liability for that violation).

#### **In The Third Circuit**

In *Boyer v. The MERRY QUEEN*, 202 F.2d 575 (3rd Cir. 1953), the Third Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the district court that the defendant had violated the maritime statute requiring a warning whistle within half a mile of a curve or bend. As a result, the *Pennsylvania* rule placed the burden on the defendant, the MERRY QUEEN, to establish that its failure to properly give the warning whistle could not have been the cause of the collision. The district court held that the defendant had satisfied its burden of proof upon showing that it had given a warning signal a quarter of a mile from the bend. The circuit court reversed, finding that the defendant had failed to meet its burden of proof in that, had the signal been properly given, the plaintiff would have had an additional four minutes to take the necessary precautionary steps to avoid collision. 202 F.2d at 578-79. See also *Shell Petroleum Co., Ltd. v. Peschken*, 290 F.2d 685 (3rd Cir. 1961) (if the ship's failure to obey the bridge's signal contributed to the collision, she cannot recover by virtue of the *Pennsylvania* rule); *Tank Barge Hygrade v. The GATCO NEW JERSEY*, 250 F.2d 485 (3rd Cir. 1957) (if a statutory violation is alleged as the reason for the collision, the *Pennsylvania* rule requires that such alleged violation not be ignored by the court); *Tide Water Associated Oil Co. v. The SYOSSET*, 203 F.2d 264 (3rd Cir. 1953) (under the *Pennsylvania* rule, it is well settled that when a vessel, at the time of collision, is violating a statutory rule intended to prevent collisions, that the burden is hers to show that such fault could not have been a contributing cause); *The BOHEMIAN CLUB*, 134 F.2d 1000 (3rd Cir. 1942) (the *Pennsylvania*

rule requires a vessel in violation of a statutory rule intended to prevent collisions to establish that such violation could not have been the cause of the collision).

#### **In The Fourth Circuit**

In *Esso Standard Oil Co. v. Oil Screw Tug MALUCO I*, 332 F.2d 211 (4th Cir. 1964), the Fourth Circuit recognized that, under the *Pennsylvania* rule, the burden of proof is on the party in violation of a marine safety statute, especially when it is contended that the violation was a factor in the collision, to prove that such violation was not causally related to the collision. The *Pennsylvania* rule is a "salutary and fundamental doctrine." 332 F.2d at 215. Further, the *Pennsylvania* rule creates a strong presumption that the statutory fault is one of the contributing causes of the collision. *The FORT FETTERMAN v. South Carolina State Hwy. Dept.*, 261 F.2d 563, 569 (4th Cir. 1958). See also *Gary v. U.S. Oil Screw ECHO*, 334 F.2d 199 (4th Cir. 1964) (under the *Pennsylvania* rule, to escape liability for a violation of a marine safety regulation, a vessel must acquit herself of every reasonable possibility of contribution to the misfortune); *Rowe v. Brooks*, 329 F.2d 35 (4th Cir. 1964) (failure to comply with statutory requirements and regulations has frequently received the severest condemnation of the courts, and, when such violation is clearly established, the presumption arises that it contributed to the collision, unless the contrary is obviously apparent); *Osaka Shosen Kaisha, Ltd. v. Angelos, Leitch & Co., Ltd.*, 301 F.2d 59 (4th Cir. 1962) (it has long been the rule that a vessel, in violation of statute, will be held solely at fault unless the evidence to establish the fault of the other vessel is clear and indisputable).

### In The Fifth Circuit

For well over fifty years, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit has applied the *Pennsylvania* rule to shift the burden of proving causation on to the party who is found in violation of a maritime safety statute or regulation. Public policy reasons supporting the *Pennsylvania* rule have moved the Fifth Circuit to further extend the *Pennsylvania* rule not only to maritime collision cases between two vessels but also to maritime allisions between a vessel and a stationary object. *Florida East Coast Railway Co. v. Revilo Corp.*, 637 F.2d 1060 (5th Cir. 1981). See generally *Candies Towing Co. Inc., v. M/V B & C ESERMAN*, 673 F.2d 91 (5th Cir. 1982) (the *Pennsylvania* rule is to be broadly applied in maritime tort actions); *Allied Chemical Corp. v. Hess Tankship Co. of Delaware*, 661 F.2d 1044 (5th Cir. 1981) (the time honored *Pennsylvania* rule places a heavy burden upon the party attempting to prove lack of causation between his statutory violation and the resulting collision); *Andros Shipping Co. v. Panama Canal Company*, 298 F.2d 720 (5th Cir. 1962) (the *Pennsylvania* rule is made applicable to the resolution of a maritime dispute upon proof that one party violated statutory safety regulations); *Republic of United States of Brazil v. The M/V "MARKLAND"*, 290 F.2d 165 (5th Cir. 1961) (violation of a maritime safety statute triggers application of the *Pennsylvania* rule).

### In The Sixth Circuit

In *Federal Insurance Co. v. S.S. ROYALTON*, 312 F.2d 671 (6th Cir. 1963), the Sixth Circuit held that a heavy burden of proof rested upon the defendant, S.S. ROYALTON, to show not only that her violations of statutory rules of navigation might not have been the cause of the collision but also that her violations could not

have contributed to the collision. As a result of the defendant's failure to meet this burden, the circuit court reversed the lower court's judgment of dismissal in favor of the defendant. In remanding the case, the circuit court stated that in order for the defendant to escape liability, she must prove that the accident could not have been avoided if she had reduced her speed upon hearing the plaintiff's fog signal or if she had reversed engines when she received no assent to her passing signal. 312 F.2d at 677. See also *Reiss Steamship Co. v. United States Steel Corp.*, 374 F.2d 142 (6th Cir. 1967) (the *Pennsylvania* rule places a heavy burden on vessels failing to follow statutory navigational rules by requiring them to show that such fault could not have contributed to cause the collision); *Pure Oil Co. v. Union Barge Line Corp.*, 227 F.2d 868 (6th Cir. 1955) (the general rule in this country is that a vessel, failing to follow statutory navigation rules at the time of a collision, must prove, in order to escape liability, that such failure could not have caused the collision); *Eastern S.S. Co. v. International Harvester Co. of New Jersey*, 189 F.2d 472 (6th Cir. 1951) (a vessel, in violation of a statutory rule of navigation at the time of a collision, must show that such violation could not have contributed to the collision).

#### **In The Seventh Circuit**

The United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit has repeatedly held that the *Pennsylvania* rule is long-settled law that must be strictly applied. As a result of the strong public policy considerations favoring the *Pennsylvania* rule, the Seventh Circuit, along with several other circuits noted herein, has extended the *Pennsylvania* rule to maritime allisions between a vessel and a stationary object. *Complaint of Wasson*, 495 F.2d 571, 580 (7th Cir. 1974). In *Wasson*, the Seventh Circuit

held that the *Pennsylvania* rule was triggered equally by violations of federal statutes, state statutes, or local ordinances. Hence, the *Wasson* Court reversed the lower court and held that the vessel, in violation of both federal and state statutes, had failed to meet her burden of proof that her statutory noncompliance could not have been one of the causes of the collision between the barge and the bridge pier. 495 F.2d at 584. See also *First National Bank of Chicago v. Material Service Corp.*, 597 F.2d 1110 (7th Cir. 1979) (once statutory fault is shown, the *Pennsylvania* rule raises the presumption that the fault was, at least, a contributory cause of the disaster); *First National Bank of Chicago v. Material Service Corp.*, 544 F.2d 911 (7th Cir. 1976) (the *Pennsylvania* rule shifts the burden of proof in collision cases to the party in violation of a statutory navigation rule at the time of the collision); *Commercial Transport Corp. v. Martin Oil Service, Inc.*, 374 F.2d 813 (7th Cir. 1967) (the *Pennsylvania* rule, and the many subsequent cases following it, casts the burden of showing that a statutory violation could not have contributed to the maritime accident upon the party in violation).

#### **In The Ninth Circuit**

In *Waterman Steamship Corp. v. Gay Cottons*, 414 F.2d 724 (9th Cir. 1969), the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held that:

[W]hen, as in this case, a ship at the time of a collision is in actual violation of a statutory rule intended to prevent collisions, it is no more than a reasonable presumption that the fault, if not the sole cause, was at least a contributory cause of the disaster. In such a case the burden rests upon the ship of showing not merely that her fault might not have been one of the causes, or that it probably was not, but that it could

not have been. Such a rule is necessary to enforce obedience to the mandate of the statute.

414 F.2d at 736. Further, the circuit court, citing *The DENALI*, 105 F.2d 413 (9th Cir. 1939), *rehearing*, 112 F.2d 952 (9th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 61 S.Ct. 65 (1940), held that:

This burden is frequently extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the violator to discharge, in the nature of things; and therein lies the true penalty imposed upon him.

414 F.2d at 736. In *Waterman Steamship Corp.*, the Ninth Circuit relied on the *Pennsylvania* rule, even though the burden of proof issue was not specifically considered by the district court, and extended the Rule to cases involving a party's failure to provide its ship with navigational equipment required by statute. In making such an extension, the circuit court held that *Waterman* had not sustained the heavy burden of proof placed upon it by virtue of its failure to equip its ship as required by statute. 414 F.2d at 737. See also *Union Oil Company of California v. Tugboat JACINTO*, 451 F.2d 1369 (9th Cir. 1971) (under the *Pennsylvania* Rule, one vessel's violation of a statutory command is not excused merely because the fault of the other vessel, with regard to the collision, was more flagrant and shocking); *Pacific Tow Boat Company v. States Marine Corp. of Delaware*, 276 F.2d 745 (9th Cir. 1960) (under the *Pennsylvania* rule, the vessel guilty of violating a statute pertaining to equipment or navigation must, in order to escape liability, prove not only that the fault shown did not contribute to the collision but also that it could not have contributed to the collision); *States Steamship Co. v. Permanente Steamship Corp.*, 231 F.2d 82 (9th Cir. 1956) (the *Pennsylvania* Rule has been consistently followed in this circuit); *Matson Navigation Co. v. Pope and Talbot, Inc.*, 149 F.2d 295 (9th Cir. 1945) (under the *Pennsylvania*

rule, a vessel violating an applicable statutory rule is prima facie at fault and, to relieve herself of liability, has the burden of proving that the collision could not have been caused by such fault).

### CONCLUSION

The decision of the District Court and the Eleventh Circuit in this case conflicts with all prior decisions of this Court and the Circuit Courts of Appeal involving ship collisions and the violation of a collision-avoidance statute or regulation.

For the foregoing reason, Petitioners respectfully pray that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment and opinion of the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Dewey R. Villareal, Jr.

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**APPENDIX**

**IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT**

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**No. 81-5608**

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ST. GEORGE PACKING COMPANY, INC.,  
*Plaintiff-Appellee,*

vs.

S/S COVE RANGER, her engines, tackle,  
boilers, equipment, furnishings, in rem, and  
COVE SHIPPING CO., INC., in personam,  
*Defendants-Appellants.*

U.S. Court of Appeals  
Eleventh Circuit  
FILED  
DEC 28 1982  
Norman E. Zoller  
Clerk

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**Appeal From The United States District Court  
For The Middle District Of Florida**

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**ON PETITION FOR REHEARING AND  
SUGGESTION FOR REHEARING EN BANC**

(Opinion November 09, 1982, 5 Cir., 198\_\_, \_\_ F.2d \_\_\_\_).  
(December 28, 1982)

Before HILL, KRAVITCH and HENDERSON, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:

(✓) The Petition for Rehearing is DENIED and no member of  
this panel nor Judge in regular active service on the Court

having requested that the Court be polled on rehearing en banc (Rule 35, Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure; Eleventh Circuit Rule 26), the suggestion for Rehearing En Banc is DENIED.

( ) The Petition for Rehearing is DENIED and the Court having been polled at the request of one of the members of the Court and a majority of the Circuit Judges who are in regular active service not having voted in favor of it (Rule 35, Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure; Local Eleventh Circuit Rule 26), the suggestion for Rehearing En Banc is also DENIED.

( ) A member of the Court in active service having requested a poll on the reconsideration of this cause en banc, and a majority of the judges in active service not having voted in favor of it, rehearing en banc is DENIED.

ENTERED FOR THE COURT:

/s/ ALBERT J. HENDERSON

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United States Circuit Judge

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

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No. 81-5608  
Nonargument Calendar

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D.C. Docket No. 80-134-Civ-T-GC

ST. GEORGE PACKING COMPANY, INC.,  
*Plaintiff-Appellant,*  
versus

S/S COVE RANGER, her engines, tackle,  
boilers, equipment, furnishings, in rem, and  
COVE SHIPPING CO., INC., in personam,  
*Defendants-Appellants.*

---

APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT  
COURT  
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA.  
November 9, 1982

Before HILL, KRAVITCH and HENDERSON, Circuit Judges.  
PER CURIAM

AFFIRMED. See Local Rule 25.

"Costs taxed against defendants-appellants."

ISSUED AS MANDATE: January 14, 1983.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA  
TAMPA DIVISION

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Case No. 79-586- Civ.T-GC

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ST. GEORGE PACKING COMPANY, INC.,

*Plaintiff,*

versus

S/S COVE RANGER, her engines, tackle,  
boilers, equipment, furnishings, *in rem, et al.,*  
*Defendants.*

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MEMORANDUM  
FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW  
JUDGMENT ORDER

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Upon completion of all potential proceedings, this civil action was assigned to the undersigned sitting at Tampa by special designation. A bench trial was had which was completed March 6, 1981. The following facts were admitted in evidence in the pretrial stipulation:

- "1. Shrimp Trawler LARRY AND MABEL II was owned by ST. GEORGE PACKING, CO., INC.
- "2. On March 16, 1979, the date of the collision, SS COVE RANGER was owned by C.T.S. ASSOCIATES, a partnership. C.M.C. TANKERS is the successor to C.T.S. ASSOCIATES and ownership of SS COVE RANGER was transferred to C.M.C. TANKERS on September 4, 1979. COVE SHIPPING INC. is the operator of SS COVE RANGER and employed the Master, officers and crew of SS COVE RANGER on board said vessel at the time of collision.
- "3. It is admitted that at 1000 local time March 16, 1979 Shrimp Trawler LARRY AND MABEL II and SS COVE

RANGER collided at Latitude [sic] 24° 31 North, Longitude 83° 28 West, a position approximately 30 nautical miles West by South of Dry Tortugas and as a consequence of collision Shrimp Trawler LARRY AND MABEL II sank and became a total loss."

At the conclusion of the trial, I was convinced that the decision must be for the plaintiff and against the S/S Cove Ranger and its owners with no fault or neglect in navigation and management of the shrimp trawler assessed against plaintiff. Based upon the evidence in this case, this Court is convinced that the cause of the collision was the failure of the Third Mate on the S/S Cove Ranger to sound a warning signal as he approached the trawler Larry and Mabel II. As Judge Markey says in his article in 80 F.R.D. 203, 218, I was ready with the decision at the trial's close. But the practice is, of course, that the Findings and Conclusions must be written and transcribed.

The Court in this case has been favored by the presence of learned and expert admiralty counsel. The issues have been sharply presented by both litigants by their counsel. Trial briefs were prepared and proposed findings and conclusions, as well as post-trial briefs have been filed, served, and have been carefully examined. I am in accord with the summary of plaintiff's counsel where he speaks of circumstances leading to the collision. He has said and this Court adopts his summary as Findings of Fact in part:

"COVE RANGER and LARRY AND MABEL II collided at 1000 hours on the morning of March 16, 1979 on the high seas approximately 30 nautical miles Westerly of Dry Tortugas Lighthouse. The weather was bright and clear. There was a rough Northeasterly sea running with Northeasterly winds of 25 miles per hour. LARRY AND MABEL II was proceeding Northeasterly toward Ft. Myers into the rough head seas. She was underway in company with another trawler owned by Plaintiff. She was shipping seas over her starboard bow and down her starboard making visibility to starboard difficult. She was totally unaware of the presence of COVE RANGER until an instant before collision.

"COVE RANGER was underway toward Corpus Christi at full sea speeds and making 16.2 knots. In view of her size

and the height of her navigation bridge above the water, her third officer was unaffected by existing sea conditions and had visibility all around the horizon for some 14 nautical miles.

"The third officer on board COVE RANGER visually sighted LARRY AND MABEL II a full twenty minutes before collision at a distance of 5 to 6 miles off the port bow of his vessel. He continued to observe the trawler visually for the ensuing twenty minutes until the vessels collided at 1000. The only thing the third officer did on the COVE RANGER was to order the ship hard right at two minutes before collision. During the preceding eighteen minutes before the hard right order, he did absolutely nothing but stand by and watch a dangerous situation become a collision. What is unusual in this case is that a collision was permitted to occur notwithstanding the numerous opportunities open to the COVE RANGER [sic] to avoid the trawler. The reason that the collision did occur was because the third officer on COVE RANGER failed to appreciate the special circumstances of the case; failed to exercise fundamental seamanship; failed to utilize the numerous means at his disposal to determine if risk of collision existed and to take means to avoid that risk; failed to sound a danger signal; and failed to blow a one blast signal when he changed course to starboard two minutes before collision.

"The fundamental error of COVE RANGER's third officer was his startling insistence on maintaining what he perceived to be his ship's 'right-of-way' into collision. For her numerous statutory violations COVE RANGER must bear the fault for this collision."

For the defendants it seems conceded that the S/S Cove Ranger, due to the lack of seamanship of the Third Mate, must be held responsible in part for the collision. But Kenneth G. Hawkes, Esquire, for the defendants, attributes some of the cause of the collision to the lack of a lookout on board the Larry and Mabel II. He summarizes the testimony as to this contention as follows:

"William Sheppard was the master of the LARRY AND MABEL II. Captain Sheppard testified that he has operated shrimp boats for eighteen years, and that he has also operated tugs in Houston and on the Great Lakes. He

testified as to the conditions in the wheelhouse from the time he went on watch until the time of collision. He testified that the visibility was severely reduced to starboard owing to the angle of the sun and the spray on the windshield. He admitted that he was aware, for several hours preceeding the collision, that he was crossing a shipping lane which would take him approximately 6 hours to cross. He knew that large ships traversed that shipping lane from both directions, that if a vessel approached from his starboard he would have to give way, and that he could not see to starboard. Notwithstanding all of this, he did not post a look-out. He did not post a look-out because there was no place on the boat where a look-out could stand without getting wet.

"Reino Taskinen was one of the two deckhands onboard at the time of the collision. He testified that he was in the galley at the time of the collision. He confirmed that the "trawler was taking on water from the starboard, but he also stated that the port side was relatively dry. He admitted that a loo-out [sic] could stand on top of the wheelhouse."

Based upon all the evidence in this case, however, it was my conclusion at the trial that the failure to post a lookout was excusable but that the failure of the Third Mate on the S/S Cove Ranger to sound a danger signal and to give a one blast signal thereafter was the sole and proximate cause of the disaster. It is, of course, true that the vessels were in the traffic shipping lane on a bright clear day, but the construction and size of the trawler moving in heavy seas with a constant spray over her bow was ample reason for the lack of a lookout. A lookout on the trawler would have been in a dangerous position during the interval prior to the collision.

In reviewing the post-trial briefs filed by counsel for each of the parties, the Court has selected portions of the summary by Jack C. Rinard, Esquire, counsel for plaintiff, as being a correct summary of the evidence and the conclusions, and they appear in the Appendix attached hereto which are adopted as the Findings and Conclusions of the Court both as to liability and damages in this case.

In preparing this decision favoring plaintiff, the Court has not overlooked the proposed findings and conclusions submitted by Mr. Hawkes for defendants. He contends that the primary cause of the collision was the failure of the trawler to maintain a proper lookout as required by Rules 5, 15, and 16, and the failure amounted to a violation of Rules 15 and 16 and was the reason why the trawler failed to give way as required, and further that the trawler was in violation of Rules 2 and 7 of the International Rules of the Road. He contends that the S/S Cove Ranger complied with Rule 17 by maintaining her course and speed and by altering her course to starboard in an attempt to avoid a collision. Mr. Hawkes for defendants cites *United States v. Reliable Transfer Company, Inc.*, 421 U.S. 397 (1975), contending that liability must be allocated between the parties proportional to the comparative degree of their fault. He urges that the Court find the S/S Cove Ranger but 25% at fault and, of course, the trawler, 75% at fault. But contrary to Mr. Hawkes' contentions I conclude that there can be no negligence attributed to the trawler, which would amount to the proximate cause of the collision. The proximate cause of this collision was the act of the Third Mate on the S/S Cove Ranger, all as outlined in plaintiff's brief and summary in the Appendix.

On the issue of damages, there is no substantial dispute. As the collision was the sole fault of the S/S Cove Ranger and the trawler became a total loss, plaintiff is entitled to full recovery and prejudgment interest. Based on the evidence, these damages are as claimed, that is:

Market value of LARRY AND MABEL II at time of loss		\$140,000.00
Market value of catch of shrimp on board		17,196.00
Crew effects:		
William Sheppard	\$ 287.00	
Jon Taskinen	1,307.00	
Reino Taskinen	264.00	1,858.00
Fuel oil on board trawler (3,600 gallons at 47¢ per gallon)		<u>1,700.00</u>
TOTAL:		\$160,754.00

Based upon the decisions of the Court of Appeals, *Complaint of M/V Vulcan*, 553 F.2d 489, (1977), and *Gulf Oil Corporation v. Panama Canal Company*, 481 F.2d 561, (1973), prejudgment interest is allowed in accordance with the claim made by plaintiff.

In accordance with Rule 52, this Memorandum includes the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

An Order for judgment follows.

## APPENDIX

### I. The Fault of COVE RANGER.

The facts and circumstances leading to collision between LARRY AND MABEL II and COVE RANGER are set out in detail in Plaintiff's contentions contained in the Pre-Trial Stipulation. The facts leading to collision are also set out in Plaintiff's Trial Memorandum. The evidence of the witnesses at trial fairly support the contentions of Plaintiff and demonstrate that the collision was caused by the hopeless navigation of the COVE RANGER's Third Mate, Michael Power. Indeed, in view of Mr. Power's trial testimony the contentions of Plaintiff are, if anything, woefully understated.

The Third Mate was confronted with a situation on the morning of March 16, 1979 which required him to act reasonably, responsibly and in a seamanlike manner. But he did nothing. Twenty minutes before collision he sighted LARRY AND MABEL II heading into rough Northeasterly seas and taking spray on deck. He testified it was not necessary to take visual bearings using the COVE RANGER's azimuth circle and gyro repeater to determine if there was risk of collision because he could accomplish the same thing from the ship's wheelhouse by lining up a bridge window frame with the fishing vessel. Neither he nor any other of Defendants' witnesses were able to explain how this "eyeball" method equalled or exceeded taking actual bearings or displaced the mandate of Rule 7(d) that such bearings be taken. 33 U.S.C.A. § 1601 *et seq.* It is obvious that the Third Mate's method was ridiculously inaccurate inasmuch as it furnished the basis for the bearings and ranges contained in the Third Mate's statement (Plaintiff's Exhibit 2); those observations were demonstrated at trial to be totally erroneous. (Plaintiff's Exhibit 17)

Using his "eyeball" method of taking bearings the Third Mate testified at trial that he observed a "slight" bearing change to the left. This would indicate that the vessels would clear one another with the COVE RANGER passing ahead of LARRY AND MABEL II. In point of fact, the vessels had to have

been on a collision course, with the relative bearings between them virtually unchanged, or there would have been no collision. This fact was explained by Captain E. B. Hendrix and was demonstrated by Captain Hendrix' plot working backwards from the time of collision at 1000. (Plaintiff's Exhibit 18).

COVE RANGER was in the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico (Plaintiff's Exhibit 1) and there was nothing to prevent the Third Mate from directing her course in any direction necessary to avoid risk of collision.

LARRY AND MABEL II could have received a radio call from COVE RANGER prior to collision and was monitoring the cailing frequency. But the Third Mate did not even consider raising the trawler by radio because in his experience fishing vessels sometimes "don't answer." Mr. Power's reservoir of experience at sea was certainly less than vast; he was in his 36th day on his first job as a Third Mate. LARRY AND MABLE II was a fishing vessel that would answer a radio call—her Captain was listening.

John Flanagan, Master of COVE RANGER, testified that one of his standing orders to the officers of COVE RANGER was to call him to the bridge at any time when there was doubt. The Third Mate never called Captain Flanagan because, as the Third Mate put it, he was not in doubt until the last minute. It is perfectly obvious that the reason Mr. Power was not in doubt until it was too late to act is because of his eyeball bearings of the fishing trawlers which led him to erroneously conclude that the vessels would clear one another. Had he taken the bearings required by steamship and the Rules of the Road he would have perceived that risk of collision existed and, perhaps, taken some action.

Captain Flanagan testified that another standing order on COVE RANGER is to give all traffic a wide berth; that small vessels usually keep out of the way of large ships such as COVE RANGER but when they do not, COVE RANGER moves out of the way. Moreover, Captain Flanagan blows danger signals when small vessels approach within one-half mile of COVE RANGER.

He also pointed out that the maneuvering signals required by the Rules of the Road, Rule 34, are also given by COVE RANGER. The Third Mate gave no whistle signals, neither the maneuvering signal when he went hard right at 0958 nor the danger signal at any time. His reason for failing to blow the danger signal was that he was in an "excited state." One point is firmly established in the evidence. Had LARRY AND MABLE II received a warning of COVE RANGER's presence as short as a minute before collision the trawler could have been stopped and the collision avoided.

According to the Third Mate, LARRY AND MABEL II was approximately 2 points forward of the port beam of COVE RANGER at a distance of 4 ships lengths, approximately 2,500 feet, when he decided to go hard right. Again, the observations of Mr. Power were demonstrated to be wholly inaccurate. At trial he agreed that at an estimated speed of 5 knots for LARRY AND MABEL II it would have taken the trawler five minutes to cover the 2,500 feet to COVE RANGER and during that period COVE RANGER would have proceeded on her tract at the rate of 1,600 feet per minute. In other words, given his observation, there could have been no collision!

Captain E. B. Hendrix explained how the collision had to have occurred. The two vessels were on collision course with their relative bearings unchanging. COVE RANGER went hard right at a point when LARRY AND MABEL II was approximately 2 points off the port bow of the tanker at a distance of slightly more than one-half mile. The hard right rudder caused the tanker to turn, as ships normally do, about her pivot point located in the fore part of the vessel. Most of her length was swinging through the water directly toward the trawler. The trawler was initially stuck on its starboard outrigger and spun into the tanker well aft on the tanker's port quarter. Impact occurred at 1000, two minutes after the hard right order was given. These facts demonstrate that any brief reduction in the headway of the trawler following a warning of COVE RANGER's presence would have averted collision. The danger signal, which the Rules absolutely require to be given in such circum-

stances, would have furnished the requisite warning. Rule 34(d), 33 U.S.C.A. § 1601 *et seq.*

The neglect, mismanagement and lack of seamanship on the part of COVE RANGER's Third Mate was total and unmitigated; the faults of the Third Mate were the sole cause of the loss of LARRY AND MABLE II.

## II. Did LARRY AND MABLE II Fail to Post a Lookout?

From their opening statement through a brief closing argument Defendants have conceded that COVE RANGER was at fault for the collision. However, Defendants suggest that her fault contributed only 25% to collision and that LARRY AND MABLE II must bear 75% of the loss for failure to post a lookout. Based on the evidence in the case and the utter failure of the Third Mate of COVE RANGER to take any meaningful action to avoid collision, Defendants' suggestion is, with respect, total nonsense.

Defendants argue that the comparative negligence rule now applicable in cases of collision, laid down by the Supreme Court in *United States v. Reliable Transfer Co., Inc.*, 421 U.S. 397 (1975), requires the Court to look at the action of both vessels involved in collision and to determine whether the acts of either, or both, contributed to collision, and if so, to allocate fault accordingly. Plaintiff has no quarrel with that statement of the law. The difficulty is that the law must be applied to the facts of this collision. The question therefore is whether LARRY AND MABLE II failed to post a lookout and, if so, did that failure contribute to collision and, again, if yes, to what degree?

The burden is of course on Defendants to establish that no lookout was posted on LARRY AND MABLE II and to also establish that such failure contributed to collision. Had no lookout in fact been posted on the trawler Plaintiff would concede that there was fault contributing to collision. But, the significant evidence in this case is that Captain Sheppard was on lookout, and was endeavoring to see any traffic in the area. Given the circumstances in which the trawler was operating, and the fact

that the vessels were on collision course, COVE RANGER was constantly on a relative bearing approximately 4 points off the starboard bow of the trawler, squarely in the area of worst visibility caused by the water the trawler was shipping and the reflected sunlight. As Captain Sheppard testified, he was looking out and he could see as well as anyone else he could have positioned on the trawler.

Captain Sheppard testified he could not put anyone on the bow of the trawler because she was plunging into the seas. Similarly, no-one could be lookout on top of the trawler for fear of going overboard. Defendants suggest that someone could have been posted on the trawler's after deck, but to what avail was never explained. The fact is LARRY AND MABEL II did have a lookout and that lookout, Captain Sheppard, was positioned and keeping the best lookout which the existing circumstances permitted.

The evidence completely refutes Defendants' contention that there was no lookout on LARRY AND MABEL II and Defendants have failed to carry the defense that the failure to post a lookout causally contributed to the collision. The only possible argument left to Defendants is that LARRY AND MABEL II must be faulted in some measure because Captain Sheppard, despite the fact that he was looking out, did not see the tanker. But such an argument must also fail. Before LARRY AND MABEL II can be found at fault, Defendants must establish some negligence. There clearly is no evidence in this case that Captain Sheppard did not see the tanker due to any negligence on his part or on the part of his crew. His failure to see the COVE RANGER was due to the circumstances under which the trawler was operating. Moreover, those circumstances were open and obvious at all times to the tanker's Third Mate.

There was no fault on the part of the trawler causally related to collision. The collision was solely caused by the multiple failure of Third Mate of COVE RANGER to apply the Rules of the Road and fundamental principles of seamanship.

**III. Plaintiff's Damages.**

Plaintiff proved damages in the total principal sum of \$160,754.00 consisting of the following items:

Market value of LARRY AND MABLE II at time of loss		\$140,000.00
Market value of catch of shrimp on board		17,196.00
Crew effects:		
William Sheppard	\$ 287.00	
Jon Taskinen	1,307.00	
Reino Taskinen	264.00	\$ 1,858.00
Fuel oil on board trawler (3,600 gallons at 47¢ per gallon)		<u>1,700.00</u>
TOTAL:		\$160,754.000

Defendants offered no testimony or evidence whatsoever on the issue of Plaintiff's damages. Defendants had no comment or criticism with respect to the value of the catch of shrimp or in connection with the claim for crew effects. Defendants did suggest that the trawler would have utilized some portion of the 3,600 gallons of fuel on board had she been able to travel on to Fort Myers Beach; but, the record was subsequently clarified and it is a fact that the trawler had sufficient fuel in her other tank to carry her to Fort Myers and would have arrived there with her two tanks containing 3,600 gallons intact.

Defendants suggested (but offered no testimony or evidence on the point) that the market value of LARRY AND MABEL II should be \$130,000.00 as found by the marine surveyor when she was appraised in November, 1978, and argued that the \$10,500.00 expended for a complete engine overhaul did not increase her market value. Plaintiff fails to appreciate the logic of Defendants' argument. Obviously, market value is depen-

dent upon the condition of the vessel. Mr. Villers testified that engines on Plaintiff's trawlers need be overhauled approximately every three years. Certainly, if a trawler had just completed such an overhaul at an expense of \$10,500.00, that fact could only increase her market value, not leave it unaffected. The uncontradicted testimony in the case is that the trawler was in good sound condition at the time of her loss and at that time the cost of a new wooden trawler was approximately \$200,000.00. Soon after the collision, Plaintiff replaced LARRY AND MABEL II with a fiberglass trawler at a cost substantially in excess of \$200,000.00. Given all of the circumstances, Plaintiff submits that its claim of \$140,000.00 as the market value of LARRY AND MABEL II as of the date of her loss is fair and reasonable.

Plaintiffs' trawler was a total loss and in such cases the measure of recovery is market value plus interest. *Standard Oil Company v. Southern Pacific Company*, 268 U.S. 146, 155-156 (1925). Interest on the market value is an element of damage. *O'Brien Bros., Inc v. The Helen B. Moran*, 160 F.2d 502, 506 (2d Cir. 1947). At trial Plaintiff made it clear that it does not seek anything for loss of use of LARRY AND MABEL II; that is seeks only its market value plus interest. Plaintiff proved that at the time the LARRY AND MABEL II was lost it was paying interest rates of 11 1/4% to finance its fishing vessels. Plaintiff seeks, and is entitled to receive, interest on the market value of the trawler from the date of her loss on March 16, 1979 at the rate of 11 1/4% until paid. See: *Sabine Towing and Transportation Company, Inc. v. Zapata Ugland Drilling, Inc.*, 553 F.2d 489, 491 (5th Cir. 1977). With respect to its other element of damage, loss of catch, crew effects and value of the fuel oil on board the trawler, Plaintiff is entitled to prejudgment interest at the prevailing rate of 8%. *Gulf Oil Corporation v. Panama Canal Co.*, 481 F.2d 561 (5th Cir. 1973).